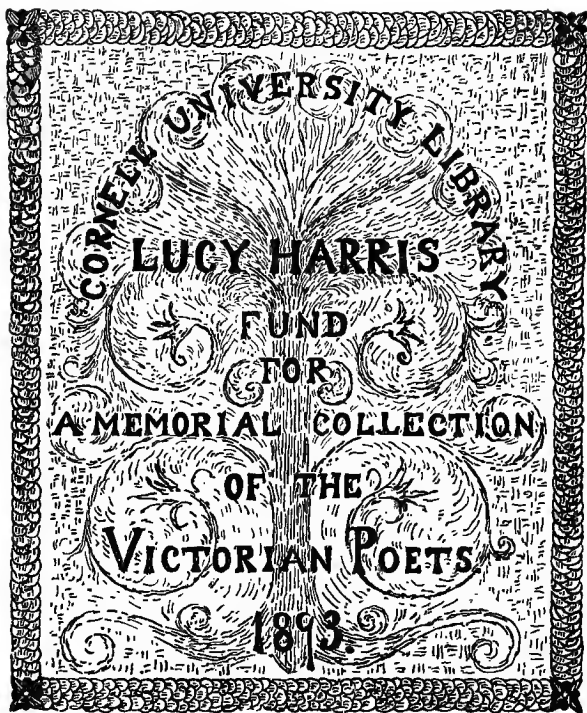
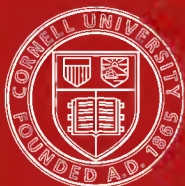


LAYS OF COMMON LIFE

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BY
WILLIAM TOYNBEE.





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LAYS OF COMMON LIFE

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BY

WILLIAM TOYNBEE

Author of "A Selection from the Songs of De Béranger" in English Verse etc

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LAYS OF COMMON LIFE.

OUT OF IT!

Oh, she's handsome enough, I admit, in her way,
That, at least, the world's always allowed,
Though she wouldn't be but for enamel, they say,
Which, of course, stands the test of a crowd.
Her hair, too, once really that old-fashioned gold
Such as nowadays seldom is seen,
On careful inspection discloses, I'm told,
An awkward substratum of green!

“ Do I know her ? ” Well, after a fashion, I do,
When I'm not about town with my daughters,
Or am killing at Trouville an “ off ” week or two,
While my lady's at Aix for the waters ;
I rather like looking her up, you see, then,
She's such deuced good company still,
As most women-folk are (that's to say, for us men)
When they once take to trotting down hill.

“ Who was she ? ” Why, Marmaduke Davenal's girl ;
I dandled her when in short frocks,
Long before, don't you know, he came out as an
Earl,
Or had handled a Treasury-box ;
A shy little creature she seemed in those days,
Sort of blend of a blush and a blink ;
You'd as soon have imagined her one of the “ strays ”
As have pictured a bishop in pink !

That's her ex-husband, Badgermore, coming by
now ;

He, of course, says the fault was with her ;
But there's no sort of doubt that he started the row—
A rank bully combined with a cur ;
Good deal older than she was, had been in the
Guards,
Where we nodded, and that's about all ;
Sort of fellow who, somehow or other, at cards,
Has the luck always well within call.

“ The other ? ” Oh, he was a nice little chap,
Kind of cousin to Monty Glengarrow,
In some Government office, was minus a rap,
And had been with her brother at Harrow ;
Didn't mean any mischief, I daresay, at first,
Used to look in for five-o'clock tea,
While my lord, who the *tête-à-tête* carefully nursed,
Rubbed his hands at the Carlton in glee.

Well, everything comes, as old Dizzy laid down,
To him who's contented to wait ;
They became in a twelvemonth the talk of the town,
And succumbed in due course to their fate.
She told me the story herself at Dieppe,
Where I met her installed with the lad ;
Of course, *she* had never regretted the step,
Though one saw at a glance that *he* had.

However, he stuck to his guns like a man,
Which you can't always say for the rest,
And they'd made up their minds, so at least the
talk ran,

To make a new start in the West.
But, as luck would have it, upon their way home
(They had been abroad, touring about)
He contrived to pick up a bad fever in Rome,
And in twenty-four hours was snuffed out.

So she's settled down here again now, I suppose ;
Well, one's awfully sorry, of course,
And I'm not a psalm-singer, like Cantley, God
knows,
Who prowls about preaching remorse ;
Still, a woman who's made a misdeal, don't you see,
Can't expect to be treated the same,
And if she's cold-shouldered by you and by me,
Why, it's only the rules of the game.

Poor thing, she looks devilish down on her luck—
(That's a smart little hack of Fitz Erle's),
Still, in things of this sort one must follow the ruck,
Only due, don't you know, to one's girls—
Half-past six? Didn't think it was nearly so late ;
By the way, you're a bit of a sinner,
What d'you say to the Bristol, a quarter-past eight ?
Little Canichette's coming to dinner !

TURNED OFF!

There, 'ang up the bill-'ook, missus, and give us my
pipe and a light ;

“ Ain't I ready for supper ? ” No, thank'ee, I wants
no supper to-night ;

'Twill be time enough when I'm 'ungry to turn to
the vittals and drink,

To-night all I wants is the baccy, and to sit by the
fire and think.

“ What about ? ” wor it that ye wor axin ? Lor'
bless 'er, poor soul, I forgot,

I 'asn't as yet bin and told 'er—and yet I'd as lief
be shot,

Like our lad as went out for a soger last year in the
Injin fight,

As tell 'er, the poor old missus, why I can't eat no
supper to-night.

Yet, tell 'er I maun, same as Joey was forced to
stand there stock still,

And face them davils of Injins as they swarmed on
'im down the 'ill,

And the longer yer waits for to do it, why the
wusser it be I s'pose,

So, I'll just get my pipe well started—that's it—
and then orf I goes!

Well, missus, I'se got news for yer, but yer maun't
now take it amiss,

When we lorst our Joey yer bore up, and so yer
maun do ower this,

Not as this 'ere time, lor' bless yer, it's anything
like as black—

It's only my lord's goin' a tourin', and I—well, I'se
got the sack!

There, don't say no 'ard things, missus, it ain't my
lord's fault, mebbe ;

'E's allers bin fair enough spoken, and her leddyship
so 'as she ;

But as the folks says at the orfice ('tis them, in
course, 'as to speak),

They must begin savin' somewhere, and I corsts
'em twelve shillin' a week.

There's them fellers, yer says, in powder, and her
leddyship's pair o' cobs,

As she spansk with to church in the summer, or a
goin' to 'ave tea with the nobbs,

And the chap as they calls 'er "tiger" (tho' why
puzzles my old crown !),

And them deer we gets never a taste on—why, yer
says, don't they put *them* down ?

Or them horchids my lord's so crazed with, each
blossom, as I've 'eard said,

If yer reckons one year wi' another, corsting ower
a guinea a 'ead !

And the phezzants as stands in a pot, too, by the
time they be ready for killin'—

Why don't they, yer says, put *them* down afore they
docks my twelve shillin' ?

There, I can't tell yer, missus; says passon, some
things 'ere on earth below,

It's no sort o' use to inquire on; yer isn't supposed
to know ;

And this 'ere be one on 'em, mebbe; and passon
'e's no bad chap,

And things ain't a goin' so easy as they used to wi'
'im, mayhap !

Still, my feyther 'e served my lord's feyther, as
afore 'im 'is feyther, 'e

Werked, too, for my lord's grandfeyther, as I 'ave
for this 'un, yer see,

Ever since just a lad from collidge 'e took to the
title and 'states,

And it's 'ard when ye're nigh agen sixty, to be
turned like a tramp from the gates !

But there, I'se too old for them meetin's they talks
on, the younger chaps,
And flags, and brass bands, and what not, and
spoutin' from four-'orse traps ;
Says passon, the Lord 'as willed it, so I 'ad best,
too, be willin' ;
And the werk'us', mebbe, at sixty, is as good, arter
all, as twelve shillin' !

BEHIND THE MASK.

One quick glance up at the window, one wave of the
gleaming sword,

One last bright look of devotion from the brave
young face she adored.

The slowly retreating bayonets, the street crowd
hurrying on,

All still where just now was tumult, and she knows
that her darling's gone.

Smiles in the throng of fashion, smiles amid plea-
sure's Fair

(For Guardsmen must do their duty, and brave girls
never despair!);

Her loveliness all eyes witching, her voice dwelling
in all ears—

And then in the hush of daybreak, a cheek, ah,
how wet with tears !

Night in the ice-bound trenches, the ice-wind
raving shrill,

Snow o'er the sullen valley, snow on the frowning
hill.

Dark forms motionless lying, as never the living
lie,

And a young face pale and wasted upturned to the
starlit sky !

* * * * *

Smiles in the maze of pleasure, smiles amid
fashion's whirl,

(Tho' Guardsmen may die for duty, there's duty,
too, for a girl !);

Splendour, and rank, and riches, a lot 'mid life's
roses cast—

Only, one name never mentioned, only, one door
never passed!

Only, in winter's twilight, before the candles are
lit,

And the children with mirth and laughter down
from the nursery flit;

At the heart a pitiless aching, on the cheek a tear's
dim track,

For that dead young face in the starlight—her
darling who never came back!

“ON AHEAD.”

“ A little bit low ? ” Well, I is, sir, maybe,
I ain’t took a rap since the mornin’, yer see,
And a twenty-mile tramp is a tidyish bit,
With nuffin to eat at the end on it,
Partikler when it’s best part thro’ the snow ;
Still, it ain’t just that neither what makes me feel
low.

It’s the lad ! But there, bless yer, you’ve no call to
stare,
For look as yer will, sir, yer woan’t see ’im there ;

Tho' at times on the tramp, when the sun 'as
drawed in,

And it ain't quite time yet for the stars to begin,
I thinks, some'ow, fight 'gainst the craze as I will,
I 'ears 'im a toddlin' long side of me still.

"Whose lad?" *Mine*, in course, for some'ow the
mother

Didn't take to 'im like to 'er dead un—'is brother;
Warn't unkind, can't say that—allers giv 'im 'is
share—

But for lovin' 'im, well, yer see, sir, it worn't
there.

Not as I wants to blame 'er—poor gal, she's gorn
now—

But yer loves or yer don't, and she didn't some'ow.

And at fust, not to speak of, no more didn't I.

'E worn't my sort o' lad—can't exackly say why;

Excep' 'e was allers as thin as a thread,
Which ain't much account when yer've got to get
bread ;
And mostly seemed mum-like, and wouldn't cheer
up—
No, not tho' yer reached 'im your glass for a sup !

But one day a tramping along on the pike,
I cotched 'im a look at me so wistful-like,
Just the same as yer sees a dawg 'casional do,
As yer doesn't partikler want to take to,
That says I with a laugh, "Why, what's up with
yer, lad?"
"Nuffin," says 'e, quite sorft, "'cept I loves yer so,
dad."

"Love me!" chuckles I fo myself, "Well, that's
queer,
When all as I loves now on earth be the beer !

Love me ! when I've took no more notice on 'im
Than I would on a weazel, the poor little limb !"
But when in my 'and 'ere I felt 'is'n slide,
Why, I thought, yer see, Captin, it might as well
bide.

Well, 'e worn't a good traveller, some'ow, the lad,
Wouldn't pick up a tatur or cadge for a brad ;
And at times when all day there'd been nuffin to
grind,
I'd give 'im pr'aps roughish a bit o' my mind.
But yer might just as well jaw the wind or the rain,
All 'e'd do was to snuggle up closer again !

But to cut it short, Captin (there's five good mile
still
To the crossways, and then I've got 'Arkaway 'ill),
Tho' I loved a pint then (and still does mortal bad !)
'Twor nowt to my love as grow'd up for that lad.

Ay, to sight 'im again—tho' to talk where's the
good?—

I'd take to the ribbon!—yes, so'lp me, I would!

But there, for my likes lovin' worn't, I s'pose,
meant.

I loved my poor gal, and afore long she went.

Passon says it's all right, and 'e jawed kind
enough,

But my head ain't no use, sir, for passon's book
stuff.

All I knows is I used to jog on then some'ow,

But beer or no beer, it's bad travellin' now!

For last winter I lorst 'im—I calls it that way,

'Cause I promised 'im t'other I never would say.

“When I'm gorn,” says 'e, “dad, don't yer think
as I'm dead;

I shall only be trampin' a bit on a'ead,

And you'll soon ketch me up," says 'e, 'arf with a
smile,
"And love me the same as you've done all this
while.

"I dreamed all about it last night in the barn,
A square sort of dream as I knows warn't a yarn.
So don't think I'm dead, as yer maybe might think,
For then you'll be druv, like, to keep orf the drink ;
But foot it just steady a bit, and you'll see
Some night about sunset you'll come up with me !"

Well, that's all about it ; at times, like to-night,
I gets 'arf to fancy as pr'aps 'e wor right ;
And maybe I'll come on 'im just the same still,
A-waitin' to meet me far side o' the 'ill ;
For they'd 'ardly 'ave let 'im dream that, if ontrue—
Leastways, I can't think they would, Captin, can
you ?

GONE UNDER!

“Who’s that fellow?” By Jove, you’d just better
take care.

Call him *fellow*, the swell of the school!

The best runner, best racket, best bat anywhere,

Why, that’s Crichton, you precious young fool!

“Didn’t know? New this quarter!” (could tell that,
no fear,

That “chimney-pot” pretty well shows).

What’s the odds, he’s as famous in London as
here,

Sort of fellow whom everyone knows!

“ How long has he been here? ” Oh, three years
or more,

But he always, you see, was a swell ;

The “ eleven ” his first quarter (at Lords the cock-
score !)

And his next in the “ footer ” as well.

“ Was he ever a fag? ” I should just fancy not !

Why, not even old Scroggs ever dared !

“ What’s his form? ” Upper Fifth, but he never
would swot—

Might be head of the school if he cared !

“ Is he jolly? ” Oh, jolly enough, if he likes ;

He was awfully jolly to me—

Wouldn’t let me be bullied by goggle-eyed Sykes

My first quarter in “ Number Three.”

Stopped and spoke to me too, only last holidays,

With his father, Sir Claud, in Pall Mall.

His father comes down here whenever he plays,

And, by Jove, isn’t he an old swell !

Just exactly like Crichton, except his hair's grey,
And he's got—well, a sort of a sneer ;
But when Crichton makes fifty, as he did to-day,
He's serene enough then, never fear !
By Jove, there they come, arm-in-arm, up the
hill.

Ah, I thought so—I told Brown he did.
Look, he's got out his purse, and they're both
standing still ;
There, I'll bet you he's tipped him a quid !

Every time he gets fifty he gives him one now
(Wish my governor had as much tin !)
And yet Crichton just takes it, you see, anyhow,
No more cares for it than for a pin !
By Jove, ain't he handsome ! My sister thought so,
I can tell you, when last she came here ;
Compared him to some famous statue, you know—
The Apollo they call Belvedere !

Ah, look, there's his governor saying good-bye ;

By Jove! ain't he proud of him just!

Don't you see how he keeps looking out of the fly,

Though it's beastly enough in that dust.

He means him, they say, when he's tired of the

Blues

(And of loafing he's sure to get sick)

To go into the House for their borough, St. Hugh's;

When he'll come out Prime Minister slick!

* * * * *

Say a dozen years later, and then shift the scene

To the Saunterers' Club in Pall Mall.

The Park was beginning to turn to grey-green,

And the season awaited its knell.

I had just settled down in the Temple again

From that death-trap, a tropical Bar,

And was talking old times with my school chum

Tremayne,

County Member and quondam Hussar.

“What, ‘Blunderbuss’ Battersby Government
Whip?

Why, he left in the Lower Remove!”

“Oh, all it requires is a nicely oiled lip

When you’re once settled down in the groove.”

“And Spurway of Greys, who was deuced near ‘sent,’
In the Church with two thousand a year?”

“Took to piety when his last shilling was spent,
And contrived to catch Royalty’s ear.”

“Then Pierrepoint?” “Oh, he’s now at Paris,
you know,

And by far the most promising there;

Who would ever have thought of him in the ‘F. O.,’
When at X— we all called him ‘The Bear?’”

“And Vavasour, who got degraded for cards,
And a penchant for public-house gin?”

“Out-and-out the best soldier they’ve got in the
Guards,

And just booked for the berth in Berlin.”

“Now for Crichton?” “What Crichton? There’s
one at the Bar,

But you ought to know all about him.

A long, lantern-jawed chap—very much what you
are—

Who’s, they say, just beginning to swim.”

“No, no, my good fellow, I don’t mean that man,

But his namesake who hails from St. Hugh’s,

Only son of Sir Claud, quite a different clan—

The *great* Crichton, I mean, in the Blues!”

“In the *Blues* he undoubtedly is, of one sort!—

Ah, that Crichton I’d really forgot!

Well, turn up the annals of this and that Court,

And you’ll soon find yourself on the spot.

Thought I wrote out and told you, I quite meant to do,

How came it to slip me, I wonder?

The *great* Crichton at X— at the same time with
you?

Poor chap, he’s quite done for—gone under!”

“How?” “The deuce only knows—as your
paragons will,
When a trifle too much in request;
It was women that gave him the first kick down-
hill,
And brandy accomplished the rest.
Stop, look at that man by the lamp-post out there,
With the greasy old suit of light checks,
And the fat, sodden face, and the half-stupid stare—
Yonder’s Crichton, the idol of X—!”

THE FLOWER-GIRL.

“ Flowers ! who'll buy my beautiful flowers ?
Gay with the sunshine, fresh with the showers,
Gathered so early, when dews were still bright,
Pink and carnation, and rose red and white,
Early, so early, with morning's first peep,
When you, lovely ladies, were all sound asleep !

Flowers, my poor flowers, ah, what shall I do ?
A penny, sweet ladies, a penny for two !
See, here is a white one, and here is a red,
Such roses are, sure, worth a mouthful of bread !

Drooping, you think them, or else you might buy ?
If the roses are drooping, ah, dear, what am I ?”

Flowers, pretty flowers, they're gay and they're
sweet,

But ah, they bring little, so little to eat !

Still she carries them home, and besprinkles anew

Their faint dusty petals as tho' with fresh dew,

Till the street and its tumult no longer she hears,

But dreams they are angels, all tender with tears !

THE THOUGHT-READER.

“Have I ever gone in for thought-reading?” Well,
yes in a fashion once,

Although at the orthodox system I’m altogether a
dunce;

But not long ago I’d occasion to pass myself off as
a seer,

And improved on the usual process—“How?”

Well, if you like, you shall hear—

SCENE: Say a Belgravian boudoir; TIME: Even-
ing, round about ten;

PRESENT: Old Lady S., the hostess, myself, and a
couple of men;

One, we'll call Sir Bullyon, the Banker, Tory,
Baronet, County M.P. ;
And the other, we'll call the other, Lord Algernon
V. de V.

Lord Algernon, diplomat, dandy (Rome, Paris,
Vienna, Berlin),

Unrivalled at cards and conquests, for at both
always bound to win—

“Think you've met me before? Highly honoured,
should only have been too glad,

But I'm perfectly positive never !” All the same, it
so happened I had.

Your lordship was then a shade younger, a dozen
odd years, let's say,

Tho' otherwise to a pin's head the same as you are
to-day ;

Good-looking, clear-headed, cold-hearted, the same
as you're now to a T,
When last we'd the honour of meeting, Lord
Algernon V. de V.

And I? I'd perhaps fewer wrinkles, wasn't quite,
let us hope, such a guy,
(Grief has a strange trick of aging), when last we
met, you and I ;
For instance, this hair now so grizzled was famed
for its glossy black,
In those days that you cannot remember, tho' only
a dozen years back !

And *she*? She was in her first beauty, the first
bright flush of her spring,
An angel of flower-like sweetness wherever she
spread her wing,

Who never had stolen from Heav'n, had never been
spared from above,
But to dry bitter tears with her sunshine, and soothe
aching hearts with her love.

* * * * *

“Thought-reading?” observed Sir Bullyon, adjust-
ing a well-starched tie,
“Well, if you ask my opinion, I think the thing's
all my eye,
And rascals who trade in such rubbish ought to
have their ears nailed to a post,
Tho' I don't mind a haunted manor, with a really
historical ghost!”

“Daresay,” drawled Lord Algernon drily, as his
chair close to mine he drew,
“But he'll have to wait precious long for it, his
place is so awfully new!”

Grandfather, hawker or something, father, grocer
who never gave tick ;
Present man, Member, Baronet, Hyphen, and a
brand-new place in red brick ! ”

“ Your Lordship’s a shocking cynic,” laughed I, as
I sipped my tea,
“ But then, if I recollect rightly, that’s what you
aspire to be—
Tho’ when I say ‘recollect,’ mind you, I only quote
Lady Lodore,
For as you just now assured me, we never have met
before.”

“ And yet in Madrid, I’ve a notion ”—Lord Algernon
rose from his chair,
And examined an ormolu-inkstand with a strangely-
attentive air—

“And yet in Madrid, I’ve a notion—no, Seville it was, in the street,”

His Lordship put down the inkstand, and softly resumed his seat.

“Seville? Ah, then you’re quite mistaken, never stayed there, tho’ once I did,

Now you happen to mention the subject, for a month or so at Madrid ;

Not attached, you know, to the Legation, but having some leave to spare,

Thought I might as well pick up Spanish, and go thro’ the pictures there.

“But, *apropos* of thought-reading, if you know a wrinkle or two,

I’d be really most glad of a lesson, for I dabble in it *entre nous*.

Lady S. says you're dreadfully clever, and write
with no end of go,

In fact, that's the reason I dined here, for I like
clever women, you know."

"Oh, I fear I've quite given up writing for many
years now, tho' I did

Now and then do a little at Seville (this time, you
see, *not* Madrid),

But as you're so bent on the subject, and her Lady-
ship's, too, interceding,

I'll reveal, with the greatest pleasure, what little I
know of thought-reading.

"But first understand that my system's peculiar in
this way,

As a species of incantation, it's always my rule to
play ;

Just a song or a dance or something, to get one's
subject in cue ;
So I'll sit at the piano, you, opposite, always in
view.

“ No, no, that will never answer ; can't you see you've
shifted your place ?

While I'm playing—mind, this is important—*I must
always see the face.*

‘ My music ? ’ Oh, just a trifle—ah, there, you're
shifting again—

A trifle I picked up somewhere that winter I spent
in Spain.”

Then, one of those Spanish dances, which, when
they are played quite slow,
Are as mournful and weird and mystic as anything
that I know—

For a moment he sat unruffled, then, a scarcely perceptible finch,
But diplomacy's a good mistress, and his face didn't
move an inch.

“ And now to begin—You're saying, yes, *speaking* ”
I do declare,
A thousand times better than thinking! A case of
this sort is rare ;
You're saying—a girl's beside you as sweet as a bud
in May—
‘ Inez, my darling, Inez, only hear what I have to
say.

“ I love you too well, my Inez, to hurt one hair of
your head,
Yes, rather than harm you, darling, better far to be
stretched there dead ;

But, you see, a matter of this sort can't well be
arranged in a day,
Or I'd make you my wife to-morrow, if only I saw
my way.

“ ‘That's right ! now I see you trust me, it's far the
best thing to do,
And when one's a gentleman, Inez, and one of our
Order too,
With “L'amour c'est l'Honneur” for one's motto,
it really would be absurd,
Not to name any other reason, if you didn't
believe one's word !’ ”

“ Stay ! Lord Algernon, just one moment, just one
little moment, please,
The Travellers' isn't a stone's throw, you'll keep
your appointment with ease ;

I'm tired of these Spanish dances, and so it appears
are you :

Suppose we try—well, say Chopin, *the Funeral
March will do.*

“SCENE: Paris, the Morgue—now really this is a
most singular case,

Too bad to transport one's friends here to such an
outlandish place ;

In winter, too, and what weather! see, snow and
ice everywhere,

Quite a shroud over sleeping Paris—don't you wish
that a shroud were *there* ?

“Yes, there o'er that face of anguish that once was
the home of light,

And that heart which so blindly trusted, as your
Lordship felt sure it might !

A shroud to blot out remembrance, and let you
once more go free,

*To murder another victim, Lord Algernon V.
de V.!*”

A REMINISCENCE OF REGENT STREET.

With raven-black whiskers and rose-tinted cheek,
Padded coat, jaunty hat, just a trifle too sleek,
Dapper boots, like a looking-glass each dainty
toe,

Down Regent Street saunters the elderly Beau.

Now darting an ogle, now casting a leer,
'Neath bonnet and parasol practised to peer,
Now swiftly pursuing, now loitering slow,
He's the prince of street-prowlers, the elderly Beau.

Then, flushed with his conquests of this and that
belle,
A stroll into Club-land his exploits to tell ;
The last risky story, the last naughty " mot,"
And he's ready for dinner, the elderly Beau.

" Horrid monster of wickedness ! " mutter the fair,
" If old beaux are like that, we had better beware."
Yet, he has his good points, tho' the world may not
know,
For he never parades them, the elderly Beau.

So when, half disdainful, Death taps at his door,
And his scandals are hushed, and he ogles no more,
Tho' you'd hardly believe it, tears secretly flow
From more than one eye for the elderly Beau.

TO THE LAST.

No, it ain't 'unger I'm feeling, I've got the better o'
that,

Tho' the vittles we've 'ad this fortnight ain't just
what 'ud make one fat,

But I think I'm a breakin', mother, and 'ave bin for
this month past ;

No pain, no 'unger, no nuffin, only got to the end
at last.

But there, ye maunt let it fret ye, it's only just want
o' breath,

And so ye don't die in the wurkus, there's things
that be wus than death,

And one on 'em creeped across me, as ye was
making the tea,

What if they comed from the wurkus and took yer
away from me —

There, I'll drink a drop just to please ye, but I don't
seem athirst some'ow,

I was, when ye went to make it, but I don't feel it
no more now.

So set down the cup and saucer, just anywhere, so
they'll stand,

And come and sit close to the bedside, and lay tight
'old of my 'and.

That's it, but don't take on, mother, I'm going in a
little while,

And I wants to take along with me not tears, yer
see, but a smile,

Your smile that's bin allers sunshine, whatever else
there might be,

For the fifty year and better ye've journeyed long
side o' me.

Bread ain't bin plentiful, mother ; no, toil and slave
as I might,

I've never yet bested 'unger, leastways, not afore-
to-night ;

And the rent 'as bin allers 'eavy, no matter where
we might go,

Tho' paid on the nail, eh, mother, 'tain't all can say
that, I know.

Still, tho' times seemed to get wusser, work 'arder,
that is to say,

And bread allers some'ow scarcer, with mostly more
rent to pay,

One thing we could allers count on, 'owever else we
was druv,

A thing all the guineas in England ain't nuffin to,
and that's luv !

They tells us about the angels, with faces all shinin'
bright,

And 'ow when yer dies they takes yer to a place
where it's allers light,

But tho' ye've growd wrinkled, mother, and broken
and bent, and grey,

It's you what 'as bin my angel, and beautifler far
than they!

Ay, beautifler to my thinking than ever when fust
we wed,

Tho' your 'air it was then all ripples, and your
cheek, ah, ever so red,

For then, if ye'd gorn I'd 'ave beared it, leastways
would 'ave tried some'ow,

But I couldn't, no, there, I couldn't, if ye was to
leave me now.

So don't let 'em part us, mother, as they does in the
'ouse, they say,

I'd sooner die of starvation, than get vittles in that
way;

Yes, die of starvation, mother, so you to the end I
keep—

But the sun, see the sun's a-risin', *and just as I'm
goin' to sleep!*

CAPEL COURT.

Yes, old fellow, I've sent in my papers ;

Well, the luck's been all with me so far,
But what between " Rads " and " Red tapers,"
You never know now where you are.

" Going to live down in Loamshire ? " No, thank'ee,
Maud, you see, don't much fancy The Grange ;
No, I mean to join Rookwood Fitzspankie,
And try a turn on the Exchange.

You remember him in the —th Lancers ?

A smarter chap never drew breath,
Best of " polo's," superbest of dancers,
And always well in " at the death."

“ Never settled up on ‘ Salamander ? ’ ”

“ Had to make himself scarce at ‘ The Rag ? ’ ”

Take my word for it, all a vile slander,

Spread about by that spiteful brute Wagge.

Just you ask all our chaps at the Curragh,

If he wasn't as straight as a die,

While at figures there's no one so thorough,

An owl's head with a sparrow-hawk's eye !

Why, last year he made thousands for Mango,

Who'd been looted by some blackguard bank ;

A rare partner, too, chap called Contango,

Who stands “ fizz ” such as you never drank !

By the way, if you've any loose guineas

That are eating their heads off with Cox,

I advise you to put them in “ Minnies,”

It's the safest tip out in Mine stocks.

Spank declares they're cock certain to double —

“Not paid up?” Oh, these things never are,
 And as for it all being a bubble,
 Why, the price is already at par!

“Think you won't?” why it's only a “flutter,”

Tho' as Spank says, the best one he knows.
 Still, if you like bread minus butter,
 You're all right with the funds I suppose.
 But when one's been let in for marriage,
 What's the use of a mere three per cent.?
 That's to say, if your wife wants a carriage,
 And your land don't make sixpence in rent!

Well, bye-bye—what d'you say? “It's a pity

To mix oneself up with such things,
 Only rogues who get on in the City,
 What with syndicates, wreckers, and rings?”

Pooh, you're such a rank ignoramus!

Only wait till I've played my trump card,
And then see if you still dare defame us!

Au revoir, look me up in Kite Yard.

* * * * *

Glad you like them, they're all my own choosing,

Heard about them last week at a dance;

Rather dear, but one doesn't like losing

What seems an exceptional chance.

"Gerald?" Oh, he's so dreadfully busy,

Why, I don't think he's looked at them twice;

Not so keen as he used to be, is he?

Works too hard, but he won't take advice.

Wouldn't go to the Eton and Harrow,

Shuns the Row as he would do the tomb —

Don't you call those rosettes much too narrow,

But I've got such a dolt of a groom —

CAPEL COURT.

Let me see—what was that I was saying ?

O, yes, Gerald—I don't think he's ill,
Still, work all the week, and no playing
As a rule only ends in a spill.

But I daresay he'll take things more easy
When that Captain Fitzspankie comes back.
He's quite different, always so breezy,
Indeed, far too much on that tack.
All his talk spiced with betting and races,
And—this of course, strictly *entre nous*—
After dinner kicks over the traces,
As most *viveurs* of Capel Court do.

Still, if lords can go there to make money,
We've no right, I suppose, to complain,
Past seven, and no Gerald, how funny !
Well, I hope we shall soon meet again.

Good-bye, glad you think my pair pretty—

What's that they're beginning to shout ?

“Shocking Tragedy,” where? Oh, the City!

I shall hear all from Gerald, no doubt.

With a plunge away rattled the ponies,

While I sauntered off to the Club,

Where I'd promised to dine with some cronies

I'd not seen since I first was a “sub.”

“Glad to see you!” “So we are, enchanted —”

“Stop, for God's sake, what's that, Wagge, you
said?”

“Why, that d—d thief Fitzspankie's levanted —”

“Ah! and Gerry Vane?” “Shot himself dead.”

BROKE!

“ Did I chuck it up on my own 'ook, sir? ” Well,
no, not quite such a flat!

A constable “ A ” Division knows better than go
and do that ;

Why, there ain't in the whole of London such a life,
take it altogether,

As that of a West-end p'liceman, if yer don't
reckon in the weather.

They may say what they like of the soldiers, but
they're only marchin' machines,

Tho' the p'lice *is* the ratepayers' servants, and they
calls the soldiers the Queen's!

What more do you ask of a soldier, so 'is arms
works well and 'is feet ?

While a constable " A " Division, why 'e's, sir, a
king on 'is beat !

There's Bond Street, now, in the season, any day
about five o'clock,

You're stationed at Conduit Street corner, let's say,
to prevent a block ;

Why, all you've to do, when so minded, is just to
'old up your 'and,

And no matter if they be Archbishops, they're
bound to come to a stand !

Then, again, at a Levvy or Droring-room—but
what's the use pilin' it on ?

It's a poor game boastin' of shiners when you know
as your last copper's gone !

How comed it, sir, you was inquiren', I'm a coster a
drivin' a moke,

As might 'ave bin still a p'liceman ? Well, the
rights on it is, I was broke !

“What for?” Well, when I was a youngster, I’d a
book-readin’ sort of a pal,

As would say, “when a cove comes a cropper, be
sure it’s along of a gal;”

And tho’ in them days as I speak of, I’d laugh at
’is jaw, don’t you see,

Sure as fate ’twas a gal, God forgive ’er, as turned
out the ruin of me!

“God forgive ’er!” ah, this world’s a queer ’un!
who’d ever ’ave thought on it, sir,

That *me*, as was once such a wild un, should be
askin’ God’s pardon for ’er?

For ’er, as the village called Snowdrop, so modest
she was and so good—

I’d as soon thought to pray for the angels, I’ll take
my davy I would!

Well, you’ve guessed, I daresay, that I loved ’er—
you’ve loved one yourself, sir, maybe—

And swear as they likes that it worn’t so, there ain’t
no mistake, she loved me;

If not, d'you think she'd 'ave turned me right round
from bein' loafin' and bad,

Poachin', drink, and such games in a village, as
does in the end for a lad?

Ay, sure enough, sir, that gal loved me, tho' not all
agog, as does some,

But the sort of love what's all the deeper, becos in
the main it's so mum.

Anyways, I chucked up gun and lurchin', and cards
of a night at "The Crown,"

And there wasn't a chap in the county could take
the shine out of Jim Brown!

Well, arter a bit she bein' clever, a good 'and at
learnin' and that—

Could cast up accounts like a bank-chap, and say
off the Testament pat—

The school-missus who'd bin 'er teacher spoke up
to the Government swell,

And they sent for 'er somewhere up northward to
try a berth there for a spell.

Well, I can't say I cared much about it (tho' proud
of 'er learnin', of course),
For a gal as would thrive in a city 'ud need be as
strong as an 'orse,
And she, tho' she lived in the country, with never a
black in the air,
'Twas all as at times she could tackle to get thro'
the winter-time fair!
Still, she bein' so bent upon it I couldn't well stand
in her way,
Tho' once she'd gone out of the village, I 'adn't no
call for to stay,
So the day she went off to 'er schoolin', I cleared
out myself, you see, too,
And took to the force, where a youngster couldn't
go very crooked, I knew.
Well, I got along swimmin'; good conduct always
gives you a lift up the tree,
And that, with a tidyish temper, made things pretty
smoothish for me.

So at fust, what with that and 'er letters, as used to
come every day,
There warn't, in no London Division, an 'appier
chap, you may say.
But arter a month or so, letters didn't come in so
reg'lar quite,
She was always, she made out, so busy ; there wasn't
no time for to write ;
Then every week they got fewer, till at last there
come one for to say
She'd chucked up the schoolin' for service, and was
goin' to her place that there day.
I'd better say nothin' about it, nor make no inquiry
what for,
In fact she thought that 'twould be wisest if I didn't
write to her no more,
But think of 'er always as 'appy—and 'ere comed a
sort of a blur—
And try and make 'aste to love someone more fit
for my loving than 'er.

“What did I do?” Why, just nothin’; I wasn’t a fool, don’t you see.

I know’d what that there letter meant, sir, as well every bit as did she.

I chaffed just the same with the youngsters, on dooty turned out just as smart—

Rum, ain’t it, to play at bein’ bobbish, with a knife all the while thro’ your ’eart?

Well, one night I was on at the Quadrant—you know what the duty is there,

They wants a cool ’and for that bisness, so I got a tidyish share.

I was standin’ close under a lamp-post, when past me a young woman ran,

Poorer dressed than that sort is in common, and collered tight ’old of a man.

’E shook ’er off, leastways ’e tried to, but do what ’e would there she ’ung;

’E seemed like a swell, evenin’-choker, straight-built, goodish-lookin’, and young.

“ A p’liceman ! ” bawled he ; “ where’s a p’liceman ?
 this sort of thing’s really too bad.

Come pull off this woman there, can’t you ? she’s
 drunk, the she-devil, or mad ! ”

“ ’Ands off, ” ’ollered I, “ my good woman, this ’ere
 sort of bisness won’t do.

Gents don’t pay the rates to be ’ustled in the streets
 by such parties as you ;

’Ands off, can’t you ’ear me, you ’ussy ? All right,
 I’ll soon move ’er on, sir.”

She turned with a shriek to the lamplight—*it was*
’er, yes, my God, it was ’er !

* * * * *

“ The rest ? ” ah, well, sir, you may fancy the rest,
 if I reads your face right ;

The man as ’ad called for the p’liceman didn’t get
 to ’is diggin’s that night ;

And you won't be surprised that it follered, what
folks call in natural course,
That Constable Brown "A" Division was dismissed
with disgrace from the force!

THE LAST FLIGHT.

“ Strike up with fiddle and fife and guitar !
His lordship, my lady, here all of them are !
We’ve drawn them this time with the posters it’s
plain,
So dance till they cheer you, and then dance again ! ”

She tripped from the footlights, she ran up the
board ;
A bow to my lady, a smile to my lord,
A wave to the gallery shouting in glee,—
And a tear for her darling that no one could see.

“Strike up with fiddle and fife and guitar,
For the greatest of dancers, the world-renowned
Star,
The boldest, the bravest, beyond all compare,
To flit on the tight-rope and fly through the air !”

“Encore !” cry the boxes, the “Gods” hurrah gay,
But why does she tremble, and why does she sway ?
Has her eye, once so nimble, grown dim with that
tear ?

Has she heard 'mid the bravos the gasp of her
dear ?

* * * * *

Pack away fiddle and fife and guitar !
She has made her last flight, and the finest by far,
For high o'er the gallery, high o'er the dome,
She and her darling have soared to their home !

THE SANCTUARY.

Come here and talk to me, doctor, you've nothing
to do !

With all of us quite incurable, how should you ?

Incurable ! Think of that now, isn't it sad ?

A beautiful woman like me, incurably mad !

You may smile, but I still *am* beautiful ; didn't you
see

That lawyer his Lordship sent here staring at me ?

He was there in the Court that day, and admired
me then,

And lawyers (ha, ha !) are not the most gallant of
men !

But I'm far more beautiful now than I was that day,
For golden hair isn't half so becoming as grey ;
Tho' mine was *real* gold, always had been quite
 from a girl,
If you don't believe it, ask *him*, for I gave *him* a
 curl ;
Yes, a whole curl, doctor, to *him*, a penniless lad ;
Now, if you want madness, that if you like was
 mad !
A light-hearted boy, with nothing, but just his
 sword,
A whole curl to him, and never one hair to my lord !
No, never so much as even a single hair,
Which seeing his Lordship had bought me, was
 hardly fair !
Yes, bought me just as he'd buy a horse at the
 Mart,
Except (ha, ha !) that one bright curl, and my
 heart !

My heart which couldn't be sold you see, *entre nous*,

For with the poor curl, like a cheat, I'd given that too —

My heart, which I ought to have kept religiously hid,

To sell like the cheeks and the lips for the highest bid!

It was wrong of me, doctor, as you'll no doubt agree,

For I'd been, all along from a child, for sale you see!

But somehow or other the notion had grown and grown,

That let the world say what it might, one's heart was one's own!

But that was all nonsense, doctor, as well I knew,

And I gave it away, as I had no right to do,

And *he* kept it entwined with his by that golden
curl,

By *him*, I mean—no matter who, but not the Earl—
And that's how I loved him so, tho' it was so bad,
Yes, loved and loved, and loved, till it drove me mad !
Tho' his Lordship, too, did his best with curses and
blows,

But they never knew that—except you, there's
nobody knows,

And the provocation was great, that must be said,
To find she is only a stone, the woman you've wed !
Ha ! ha ! do you think he'd have paid, if he'd only
known,

The highest price of the year for a block of stone ?
Just a statue, doctor, a statue that never smiled,
Not even—just think of that—on her only child !
Her only child ! Ah, well, it's not strange, I'm sure,
Such madness as that should be quite beyond all
cure !

Just fancy *to hate one's child!*—What, it's time to
go?

Stop, promise me one thing first (you will I know,
For you're kind, yes, doctor, that I could always
tell—),

You'll never, never, never, *let me get well!*

PROMOTED !

Heat, fierce, blinding, pitiless heat,
No shade to temper it, no retreat ;
On the treeless hill, in the valley bare,
Heat, like a furnace, everywhere !

At length from his throne the fiend of fire,
Slowly descends in sullen ire ;
Glowering till his last glare is spent,
He sinks behind the cholera tent.

The cholera tent—a shroud each wall,
And every pallet-sheet a pall,
Where pestilence trails its spectral wing,
Like a fell vulture hovering.

Where the young, and gallant, and gay,
All life and hope at the waking day,
With a single gasp, in a single throe,
Are writhing skeletons none may know!

But lo! what form 'mid the plague-thick air,
O'er each fevered brow bends pitying there?
Has Christ from His bosom a comforter sent?
Has an angel entered the cholera tent?

An angel, yes, when he wins to-night
The Victor's palm, and the Crown of Light;
Till then, till the Legions Celestial call,
A nameless subaltern—that is all!

AN ECCLESIASTICAL ORNAMENT.

“Winch bad?” Only what I expected; always is
when he’s been to a fair;

He’ll be boozing some day once too often, and go
off, if he doesn’t take care.

“Doctor thinks he will now?” You don’t say so!
and the hounds meet at Garraway Gorse,

Last chance of a good thing this season; ah, well,
I can’t go now of course.

“Come and see him?” Oh, just so, directly, suppose
one must do what one can,

Tho’ I must say for obstinate drinking, I never yet
saw such a man,

It's the liquor—and, talking of that, Jane, where's the flask that I told you to fill?—

It's the liquor, as I'm always preaching, that sends all you fellows downhill!

But I might as well try and break zebras—where's my Prayer-book, it was on the shelf,

Not on that one, that's full of French novels; never mind, I'll look for it myself—

Not quite easy, you think, in his mind, eh? Knows something, I'm ready to bet,

About that missing buck at the Manor! Ah, well, let's forgive and forget!

(Not a haunch from my lord the whole season, so I'm not going to preach on that score)—

Found the Prayer-book? What, under the novels? Never knew it on that shelf before!

If that miller comes over from Pincksey, he knows what's my price for the rick,

And I won't take a penny-piece under—just turn up the prayer for the sick!

In case I'm done out of my dinner, you've a bird,
eh, that's ready to roast ?

Just that, and a savoury omelette—who's that lout ?

Ah, the boy from the post—

Crawls along like a mute in a graveyard, but that's
just the way with these clods,

Come, hurry up there, my fine fellow, got my paper ?
good, now for the odds !

What, " Dodo " gone back for the Derby, and they're
piling it all on " The Rook ? "

Well, that sermon will have to stand over, and I
must remodel my book ;

What's to-morrow ? not Sunday ; it is, though, no
getting, I fear, out of that,

Chuck the sermon, bad bout of neuralgia, hardly do,
they'd be smelling a rat.

Hullo, who's that there on the piebald ? Why, Binks,
that new curate of Grey's,

Wish *I* could afford to keep curates, but I shan't to
the end of my days.

Morning, Binks! nicish pony you're riding, only wish you would swop it for mine.

Seen the hounds anywhere in your country? Ah, they aren't, I daresay, in your line,

Nor mine either, except on occasion, when I want to get rid of a horse—

(Must do something, you know, for a living), meet this morning at Garraway Gorse,

Most annoying! You know Colonel Darte of the Depôt? No! Well he's quite gone

On that chestnut you've perhaps seen me riding, and to-day would, I'm sure, have been on;

But a fellow out there by the cross-roads has drunk himself into "D.T."

And, of course, just as I'm in the saddle, they send round here whining for me!

Dead loss of a hundred, confound it! Just my luck, eh, what's that? you don't mind?

Well now, 'pon my soul, you're a Christian, I mean you're most devilish kind.

Tell Jacob I'm ready for "Brimstone"—(not that whip but the one with the thong),—

"Where does what's-his-name live?" Not a mile off, but I don't think, you know, he'll last long— (Here, Jacob, just shorten these leathers, if we get away, I mean to go),

Ta, ta, Binks, do the same for you some day, when you've got a deal on, don't you know!

DROPPED OUT.

“ You’d like to live in the Temple ? ” Oh, yes, it’s
pleasant enough,

If you want to be rid of organs, and don’t mind
things in the rough ;

“ A capital place to write in,” you’ve often heard it
said ?

So he always used to fancy, till he had to write for
his bread.

He’d never, you see, much practice ; a brief now
and then at Sessions,

Turnip misappropriations, and similar grave trans-
gressions ;

But after a time the attorneys, for a cause they
didn't explain,
Conferred on others their favours, and he never got
briefed again.

“Was he cut up about his failure?” Pooh,
barristers never fail!

He just turned his key on his wig-box, and hung
up his gown on its nail;

“If the fellows refuse to have me, it's because I
won't sink to their level.

Never mind, I'll stand in with the Muses, and the
law may go to the devil.”

He'd a sunny old set of chambers, high up over
King's Bench Walk,
With always a weed on offer for friends who strolled
in for a talk;

And perhaps now and then some ladies would come
from the West to see
The classic retreats of the Temple, and stay for a
cup of tea.

And so, amid court and cloister, Time managed to
slip away,
A life at least free from turmoil, if not altogether
gay,
And he wouldn't, he vowed, exchange it for the
Bar, its worry and din,
To be Lord Chief Justice of England, with the
Chancellorship thrown in !

But meanwhile what of the Muses ? Well, tho' he
filled quire on quire
With stories brimful of spirit, and poems replete
with fire,

Somehow the magazine big-wigs, who should have
sent drafts on their banks,
Returned one and all the same answer—" Declined
with the Editor's thanks."

" Never mind, I'm too good for such dotards," he'd
laugh it off after a minute
Devoted to resonant Saxon ; but the laugh had a
quaver in it,
And now and then you might have noticed, if you'd
chanced to be standing near,
On the carefully-copied manuscript the blur, could
it be, of a tear ?

Still his spirits lost little, if any, of their natural
buoyant flow,
And if here and there his mustachios betrayed a
grey hair or so,

And his brow lost a shade of its brightness, and his
cheek grew a trifle shrunk,
It was only the "Grand Night" dinners, and the '34
port he'd drunk!

One winter as Hilary sittings were just about to
begin,
My chambers being chill and briefless, and time not
too easy to spin,
It struck me I couldn't do better than saunter across
for a talk—
(I'd not looked in since the summer) to No. —
King's Bench Walk.

The staircase was dimly lighted, and disclosed its
habitual air
Of dead and departed practice, if ever it had been
there:

Mr. Jones had removed to the Cloisters, Mr. Brown
to Crown Office Row,
And if Mr. Smith was wanted, the under-porter
would know.

All was dark at the top, his landing, "Confound it!"
I growled, "what a bore ;
I wish he'd look up the lamp-man, or live on the
second floor !
Dash it, too, if the oak isn't sported ! (as I groped
for the knocker in vain),
And I've had all my grind for nothing, I'm hanged
if I come again.

"All the same, I'll just scrawl a message, if I can
get hold of a light.
Ah, that's it, I thought I had one—let's see, now,
what shall I write ?

' 5 p.m.—Just looked in, old fellow, for a chat and a whiff of smoke,
And found —' " Oh, God in Heaven! that *Death*
had sported the oak!

For there, fastened up by a wafer, was a note in a well-known hand,
Addressed " The first comer please open;" I tore it down, opened, and scanned.
Short enough; just a single sentence contained all there was to be said—
" *Don't let them bring in starvation; they'll find there's plenty of bread.*"

THE NIGHT EXPRESS.

Away and away,
Without stop or stay,
'Neath mountain and over plain ;
Leaping chasm and stream,
Like some steed in a dream,
Whose rider may never draw rein !

Who stands by yon flame
That no storm can tame,
No ice-wind quench with its breath ?
So gaunt and so grim,
Who that spectre dim ?—
'Tis the driver, the driver Death !

A reel, then a roar,
As when some wild shore
Hurls back the hurricane's stress ;—
A gleam of the moon ;
A weird wreck, corpse-strewn,
And—where is the Night Express ?

OVERBOARD.

You're the notary? No, no writing, put paper and pen away;

"My will?" I made that in England, I've only something to say;

And here, tho' they're kind in a fashion, and give me a helping hand,

Why, just poor Brittany sea-folk, they never would understand!

So I sent for you over from Hauville, a league, if not more, I'm afraid;

If you'll tell me your fee, you'll find money—what's that? You don't want to be paid?

How good ! No, don't move to the window, indeed,
I'm not going to cry,

It's only that you, a mere stranger, should come and
help me to die !—

What o'clock is it ? Ten ; how quickly the time,
when it's dark, slips away,

Not more than two hours to midnight ; I haven't
much longer to stay,

So come and sit close to the bedside, as you did
just before you stirred,

And don't interrupt and ask questions, but listen to
every word.

I was beautiful once, you'd not think it no doubt
to look at me now ;

Men cared in those days to crowd round me, I
daresay you wonder how !

First ; beauty, and pride, and glitter (the prelude's,
you see, soon told),

Then ; ruin, and ruin's sequel—priced, put up for
sale, and sold !

Well, it saved my father the poor-house, or something I daresay worse,

Got my mother a corner to fade in, made my plain little sister a purse ;

And the buyer looked pleased with his purchase, as the bells rang us off from the door,

And the jewels, all owned, were matchless, and what could a bride want more ?

Well, Sir Stanhope, to do him justice (Sir Stanhope's the buyer, of course),

Was a superfine judge of claret, an excellent seat on a horse ;

Well-looking for five and fifty, well-mannered, well-born, well-bred,

Had a castle, and half a county—and that's all there is to be said !

He was perfectly kind and courteous, had a smile that seemed to express

All I ask is the best of breeding, unimpeachable taste in dress,

And to feel from my end of the table, as I feast the
county in state,
I've a wife who is up to my china, and doesn't
discredit my plate !
And *the other* (there's mostly another deep down
in one's heart, you see,
Altho' when a bargain's a bargain, of course there
ought not to be),
Well, the other—I needn't name him—was merely
a poor bread-winner,
Who cast up Sir Stanhope's bank-book, and wrote
out my cards for a dinner.

* * * * *

A cruise to the Tropics ; Sir Stanhope laid up in his
berth, and *he*
(Sir Stanhope was always thoughtful) told off to
take care of me ;

No bank-books now to pore over, no invitations to
pen,

Only just to chat, fetch, and carry, and read to me
now and then ;

Only just a clear-voiced " Good morning, is there
anything I can do ?

Sir Stanhope, I hope, is better ? Did you hear in the
night how it blew ? "

" No, did it ? I didn't hear it, I always sleep well at sea.
Work ? Nonsense ! you've no work now, sir, except
to look after me ! "

" Very well, if you really wish it—then, what shall
it be to-day ?

Prose, poetry, laughter, pathos, or, better still, won't
you play ? "

" No, thanks, the piano wants tuning, see the sky is
without a speck,

Suppose we do nothing this morning, but go and
sit out on deck ? "

Night ; 'mid the trance-like stillness, a spice-wind
soft from the west,

The white stars restfully watching the ripples that
drift to rest ;

Sir Stanhope asleep in his cabin, I over a book
alone—

Then, a voice like the ripples' whisper, or a breath
from the spice-wind blown :

“ I've come, as you said I'd better, to tell you Sir
Stanhope's all right,

And to say—and to say—(how is it they leave that
port open at night ?)

And to say—but perhaps I'm intruding ? ” “ No, no,
stay a moment more ! ”

“ Ah, my darling ! my — ” “ Hark ! did you hear
that ? A knock, yes, a knock at the door ! ”

“ Impossible ! Who could be knocking ? ” “ Hark !
there, I hear it again !

Can't you hear it ? There ! ” “ Can I hear it ? Yes,
now I *can* hear it plain.”

“ A voice!—Great heavens!—My husband! ”—

Then a shudder, a breath drawn short,
And a finger, a pointed finger, *this* finger towards
the port!—

“ Of course, what a fool not to see it! I’m a first-
rate swimmer, you know,

Good-night, we shall meet at breakfast, just once,
sweet, before I go ;

Once again—” Then a splash, then the ripple as
tranquil, as smooth as before.

“ You, Sir Stanhope ? ” “ Yes, I’ve no medicine, and
want you to mix some more.”

(What’s that noise? Just now all was silence, you
might have heard drop a pin,

The port, close the port, can’t you hear it? The sea,
the sea’s rushing in !)

“ Fell overboard ; sharks in these waters, poor lad !
quite a loss in his way —”

*And I murdered, yes, murdered my lover!—now
you know what I wanted to say.*

THE LAST LOOK.

Out of the sunlight thro' the shade
His way he slowly wound,
Then, stooping low, a garland laid
Upon a grassy mound.

The lonely mound where lone she slept,
Of all the world his one ;
Then down the darkening hill he crept
Towards the sinking sun.

HOW THE VILLAGE VIEWS IT.

“Where’s Jessie,” you say, “as was gal at this inn,
When last you was passing thro’ ’ere?”

(Poll, just score up ’Odger a quartern of gin,
And Grimes wants a gallon of beer),

Ah, Jessie, she *was* a smart wench, as you say,
And no ’onester stepped above ground;

But she’s gone, as so many gals will, the wrong way,
And God knows where she’s now to be found.

I ain’t goin’ to screen ’er, she wasn’t no child,
As some is that gets orf the track,

And know’d well enough that once let ’er go wild,
For a gal there ain’t no comin’ back;

Still, I'll say this for Jessie, though wuss than a flat,
To be led on as she wor to fall,
She *did* love 'im dearly, no doubt about that,
And yer can't say the same for 'em all.

“Who was 'e?” Who *is* 'e, by rights you should
say,

Why the park ain't from 'ere a stone's throw ;
As fine a young chap as you'd see any day,
Which *all* says, let 'em like 'im or no ;
'Is father, Sir 'Ector's 'igh Sheriff this year,
And the young 'un we speak of, who's heir,
Will be one of these days, so at least I do 'ear,
A great Mill—ah, that's it—Millionaire.

Next election will stand for the county, you'll see,
A strong Tory, as sound as a bell ;
Is a magistrate—same lot as licenses me—
And a Yeomanry Captain as well.

Reads the lessons in church, and that beautiful too,
When he runs down at Christmas from town,
And the Rector 'as 'opes, if what folks say be true,
For his youngest, the pretty Miss Brown.

Then he lecturs sometimes about science and hart,
Down at Boroughbridge, where they've a bank,
(Tho' of course in the bis'ness 'e don't take no part,
Wouldn't do for a gent of 'is rank).

And as to the charities, why 'is cash flows
Just as tho' it was water, I swear,
Schools, shelters, and 'omes—you ain't seen, I
suppose,
The new refuge for Magdalens there?

And talking of refuges puts me in mind
Of poor Jessie you seed 'ere, you said;
Now, it wouldn't surprise me if you was to find
That it's *there* where she's 'iding 'er 'ead!

NAMELESS.

What child is that by the railing,
What mite in the darkening street,
Singing gay, while the wind is wailing,
Singing soft, 'mid the rain's wild beat ?

Singing lightly of mirth and gladness,
(Was ever a blither strain !)
In spite of the night wind's sadness,
In spite of the weeping rain ?

* * * * *

What child lies there by the railing,
On the pavement damp and chill,
As the few lone stars are paling,
And the wind and the rain grow still?

None know, there is none to name him,
A waif, as one might have guessed—
A waif, till the angels claim him
To lay on his Father's breast!

THE WAYS OF THE TOWN.

Pretty and blushing, half bashful, half gay,
She pauses a moment inquiring the way ;
“ Second turn to the left,” growls the churl with a
frown ;
“ Never mind,” she reflects, “ they’re the ways of
the town ! ”

Forgetting the daisies, forgetting the dew,
The fields with their verdure, the sky with its blue,
The larks singing upward, the sun shining down,
She has come to be trained in the ways of the town.

“ Ah,” thinks she, as weary she toils through the
heat,

“ Let us hope that all London is not like this street !
Still the country’s but fitted for milkmaid and
clown,

And it’s time that I found out the ways of the
town.”

* * * * *

Out of the gin-palace under the gas,
Half shame-faced, half bold, did you see that girl
pass,
Sham glee in her laughter, sham lace on her gown ?
Too soon have they taught her the ways of the
town !

IN OUR MIDST.

There's many a sob, and many a sigh,
A haggard cheek, and a hollow eye,
By none ever heard, by none ever found,
As gaily, gaily, the world goes round !

Silent the slave fulfils his fate,
In the land of the free, the rich, the great,
As over him Famine frowning stands,
And rivets the gyves with ruthless hands.

Time totters on, Death wistful bends,
But Famine and he are plighted friends,
So he skulks aloof from the anguish-bowed,
And watches them writhe from behind his shroud.

Death, whom the dying vainly crave !
Life, not Life, but a living grave,
Without help, without hope, without even dread,
Except for the day that will bring no bread !

There's many a sob, and many a sigh,
A haggard cheek, and a hollow eye,
In our midst unheard, in our midst unfound,
As gaily, gaily, the world goes round !

IN THE CROWD.

I never met thy glance with mine,
I never heard thee speak ;
It needed but one tear to shine
Upon thy shadowed cheek,
It needed but one fleeting sigh
To know thy lot was misery !

I never looked on thee again,
Thou wentest on thy way,
To toss amid the sea of Pain,
To fare in 'Trouble's fray ;
But still that tear, and still that sigh,
They haunt me with their misery !

I gaze into the azure bright,
And wonder if thou'rt there,
Forgetting in that world of light
This dark world of despair —
Then the blue weeps, the blithe winds sigh,
And still it lives, thy misery!

“GAY!”

“Pretty?” Ah, if you’d seen me a little time back,
When I first—well, first came here ;
My hair wasn’t this colour then, but black,
And my skin, oh, ever so clear !
But when one’s a cough that’s all day on the rack,
One soon looks queer.

“Consumption ?” What do you mean by that ?
I’m perhaps a little thin,
But then I never was over fat,
And now’s not the time to begin.
Besides (tho’ won’t you just think me a flat !)
I can’t stand gin.

“ Do I fret ? ” Sometimes on a summer night,
When I can't sleep a single wink,
And lie tossing about till the morning light
Comes stealing thro' the chink ;
But fretting, you see, makes me ill downright,
Far worse than drink.

“ Go back ? ” Ah, that's what so many have said,
But men never seem to know ; —
Why, at home they all of them think I'm dead,
Ever so long ago ;
Mother might once have seen me by turning her head
She didn't, though.

“ Can't talk any longer ? ” Ah, well, never mind,
All the same, I think you might,
I thought at first you were going to be kind ;
But I see I wasn't right —
A present ! Ah, thanks ; there's someone behind
I know ; good-night !

OUT IN THE SNOW.

Out in the snow when wild the winds roar,
And we fasten the shutters and bar up the door,
And close round the fire, and gaze at its glow,
Who is it calls to us out in the snow ?

Who is it calls to us gentle and sweet,
Thro' the din of the tempest, the billow's fierce beat,
Like the voice of the pine-forest plaintive and low,
Who is it calls to us out in the snow ?

Turn down the lamp with its soft-shining ray,
Sad let the embers smoulder away,
A pause in the prattle, the laughter's light flow,
And hark to who calls to us out in the snow !

'Tis the loved of all loved ones that dwell in the
heart,

The dear who have passed, but who never depart,
The souls that have learned what our souls may not
know,

'Tis they who thus call to us out in the snow.

But none ever heard what those faint voices say,
Tho' they whisper and woo till the dawn glimmers
grey,

And the waves sink to slumber, the winds weary
grow,

And we dream of who called to us out in the snow!

THE LAST STRAW.

“What drove him to do it?” Well, not the Squire,
that’s plain;

He offered him cottage and croft again and again,
Ay, and said always, and what he said he meant,
(I’m bailiff, and ought to know) would let drop the
rent;

Couldn’t say fairer than that, could anyone, now?
Specially with the park half under plough,
And nobody, bar the parson, asked to dine,
And the butler sacked, and a “buttons” to hand
the wine,

And screws to ride, as had ridden blood from a
lad —

No wonder he grudged his best farm going to the
bad!

But there, be ye ever so kind there are some folks
who

It ain't the least good in the world to try and take
to,

And that sort was the old man, him I mean that's
gone,

He'd sit and stare in the fire, while the Squire
talked on,

And wheedled and coaxed, as ye would a pet dog
or a bird,

But never a sign he'd give, nor utter a word.

Ye might just as well have talked to a flint in the
road,

Squire or no Squire, there he meant to bide, and
he bode.

Well, that was Christmas, and ye'll recall, never
fear,

'Twas bitterer then than we'd had it for many a
year ;

Snow, and ice, and winds that cut like a knife,
I can't call to mind such weather in all my life.

" Ah ! " says the Squire to me, at the rent-day
feed,

" If this keeps on, it won't be the law we'll need,
He'll never last thro' this weather, so let him
bide,

And die, if he will, where his father and grand-
father died ;

The land won't lose, so long as the snow lies on,
And by the time the snow goes he'll too be gone ! "

But, bless you, sometimes at eighty, say what you
will,

There's that what frost and snow and nothin' can
kill ;

And such was the case with him, tho' he took no
stock
Of aught but the sing of the fire, and tick of the
clock,
(Him as had once been the smartest, shrewdest
hand
As ever there was in the county for tackling land!)
But crouched there over the hearth, all wrinkles
and bone,
Except for the wench that did for him, always
alone —
When the snow was gone and weather a shifting
fair,
Tho' the grave had many a stouter, he still was
there!
And still the Squire, more and more put to the
pinch,
Wheedled and coaxed, but never could move him
an inch,

Till at last a chap from over Australia way
Came and offered a pound an acre from Lady-day ;
“ Ay,” bawled he, as the Squire looked a bit
askance —

For the chap had a queerish cut—“ and the rent in
advance.”

Well, there was nothing for it, whether or no
The old man liked it, now he was *bound* to go ;
You can't turn money away, and a tidy lot,
To humour a tenant who lets your best acres rot ;
But tho' we tipped him this time a lawyer's line,
He still moped there by the hearth, and made no
sign.

So says the Squire at last, “ Send for Lawyer Head,
And let's get him out before he takes to his bed,
He'll be right enough in the cottage, when once
he's there,
So you give him the fire to mope by, and old arm-
chair ;

It's hard when the whole of his life on the land's
been spent,
But they've pulled me up at the Bank, and rent is
rent."
So the lawyer got out the writ, and went to the
farm,
And gave him, as is their way, a touch on the arm,
And put it into his hand and read it out,
And read it again, so there might be no doubt ;
But still he stared in the fire and never stirred,
Or gave so much as a nod, or uttered a word.
But the next day, when we'd both come back to see
If he'd thought better on it, the lawyer and me,
We noticed, on stepping in, that the room looked
bare,
No fire on the hearth, and nobody in the chair.
"He's done us again," grumbled I to Lawyer Head,
"For the Squire won't touch him, once he's took
to his bed ;

I told you he'd be a tough 'un to bring to book,
But let's go up to the room where he sleeps, and
look."

* * * * *

Ah, well, you know what we found when we got
up there,

The Squire was wrong when he thought he
, wouldn't care ;

For when we cut him down, from the coat he wore
(As worn as himself) a paper dropped on the floor,
And on it was scrawled in his poor old trembling
hand,

(Once as bold as any you'd see in the land !),

" It's nobody's fault, but I be too old to roam,

There couldn't be no other home for me than home ;

Where the tree falls, they say, there let it lie ;

Tho' I haven't the heart to move, I have to die !"

THE LIGHT OF YEARS.

Only a faded letter !

Found on a winter's day,
When winds are fitfully wailing,
And skies frown sullen and grey.

Only a faded letter !

Written in Love's first spring,
When still Life's river flowed golden,
And Hope had not taken wing.

Only a faded letter,

Re-read by the light of years,
With a sudden greeting of kisses,
A sudden glimmer of tears !

Only a faded letter!—

Ah, how many share its fate—

Only a faded letter,

Whose answer has come too late!

TRUSTY AND ME!

A half-penny here, and a half-penny there,
Sometimes in foul weather, sometimes in fair,
I asked for no better than daily to jog
On highway and byway alone with my dog !
 Together wherever we happened to roam,
 Whatever our victuals, whatever our home,
 In vain you'd have searched the whole kingdom
 to see
 A happier pair than my Trusty and me !

In winter time London was mostly our beat,
Now in a poor alley, now in a rich street,
From East End to West End we'd wander about,
Till they lit up the lamps and the stars twinkled out !

Together wherever we happened to roam,
Whatever our victuals, whatever our home,
In vain you'd have searched the whole kingdom
to see

A happier pair than my Trusty and me!

Then in the summer, when folks went away,
To Brighton or Margate we also would stray,
Or if we got tired of the streets and the shops,
Take a tramp into Kent for a turn at the hops!

Together wherever we happened to roam,
Whatever our victuals, whatever our home,
In vain you'd have searched the whole kingdom
to see

A happier pair than my Trusty and me!

But times, I suppose, were too good to go on;
I'm still on the journey, but Trusty is gone,
And tho' I don't want for my mouthful of bread,
It's bitter to swallow now Trusty is dead!

Lonely wherever I happen to roam,
Whatever my victuals, whatever my home ;
And so to the end of the chapter 'twill be,
And we've both done our journeys, poor Trusty
and me !

THE LAST OF THE FLOCK.

Sullenly whirls the snow,
The wind it sobs and it sighs;
She o'er the hearth bends low,
He in the coffin lies.

Light on the cold dead face,
Where ever before was cloud—
At last a hiding-place,
His shame covered up in his shroud !

To-morrow they'll take him away
To his long home over the hill,
And never a word she'll say,
But let them do as they will.

Of all she loved him the best ;
For he came the last, you see,
Was the last to cling to her breast,
The last to pray at her knee.

They went from her one by one ;
Save him they had all been left—
Ah, well, Heaven's will be done,
And was not the dearest left ?

Her darling, her joy, her pride,
For all he had wrought her woe ;
Her darling—a corpse by her side,
And she not even to know !

To-morrow when he is gone,
She'll turn, may be, in her chair,
And look at the clock anon,
And fret that the child's not there ;

THE LAST OF THE FLOCK.

And call to his brothers, and scold,
And bid them search high and low,
Thro' meadow and over, wold,
And where the forget-me-nots grow

And croon o'er each baby toy
And the cradle she used to rock—
But he'll never come back, her boy,
Her lamb, the last of the flock !

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